



EPISODE 2x03 “SALVAGE”

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Teaser

EXT. ATHENS - STREETS - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Athens is somewhat modern, a mix of what we've seen of the Central Worlds and the outer planets. The streets are lined with shops and storefronts, with a mix of smaller corporate offices. Hover-vehicles pass by in the street. From some of the storefronts hang Alliance flags. MAL and JAYNE walk side by side, peering into various stores as they go.

JAYNE

Can't believe you leavin' it on, Mal. You got <some pair>.

MAL

Well, it is a tad nipsome out.

Jayne looks at his own short-sleeve shirt, then at Mal's brown coat. Everyone around them is dressed for spring.

JAYNE

Yeah. Downright frigid.

MAL

It's a damp cold. Gets into the bones. Look, don't go questioning my motives. I...

Jayne falls behind, window-shopping in front of a grocery store.

JAYNE

Would you look at that Mal... Melons.

As Mal stops, Jayne gestures to a large stack of honeydew melons, behind an LCD on-sale sign.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Beautiful, firm melons.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - SAME TIME

We see a close-up of a pair of BREASTS in a slinky dress. Mannequin's breasts.

WASH (OS)

Wow.

We pull back to see that ZOE, WASH, and RIVER are gathered around a rotating display of SLINKY DRESSES. Zoe is staring at one of the dresses as it goes around. River's got a fistful of skittles-type CANDY, which she's carefully eating color-by-color. Wash looks from the mannequin's breasts, to Zoe's, and back... and back again.

ZOE
Is it too slinky?

WASH
No such thing as too slinky.

RIVER
Not practical.

Zoe and Wash turn to her. She hasn't looked up. She appears to be counting the remaining green candies.

RIVER (cont'd)
No place to put your gun.

ZOE
There is that...
(to Wash)
Think I'd look silly with a holster over this?

She mimes a holster that would sling through her cleavage.

WASH
Silly is not what comes to mind, no.

River giggles.

RIVER
Melons...

Wash looks at River. He laughs. Zoe smiles.

WASH
Something like that, River.

River shoves a piece of candy in Wash's mouth.

RIVER
Like this?

WASH
(muffled)
Exactly.

He looks at Zoe.

ZOE
Isn't baby-sitting fun?

WASH
Hope those two are grateful.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

The cargo bay is filled with BALES OF HOPS, tied up tightly and stacked by the walls. KAYLEE and SIMON lounge on a pair of bales laid out end to end, like a couch, near the open airlock door, the ramp dropped down onto the landing area. Kaylee leans on Simon's shoulder, while Simon plays with a dried stalk of grain.

SIMON
Beer?

KAYLEE
Finest hops in the system, or so the Cap'n was told.

SIMON
And the Captain is a great expert on alcoholic beverages? I'd think that's more Jayne's line.

KAYLEE
Figure Jayne's more for the drinkin' than the knowin' about.

(beat)
Can't grow nowhere else but here. Somethin' to do with the way the light reaches Athens. It's in high demand...

Simon pretends to fall asleep, fake-snoring.

KAYLEE
Hey! I listen to your doctory insights!

Kaylee smacks Simon, and they laugh.

Beat. Simon stops and Kaylee touches his hand.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
Hey.

After a moment, Simon looks at her and smiles.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
You all right?

SIMON
River...
(beat)
Wash and Zoe will watch out for her... But.. I should be able to enjoy this without worrying... I mean, this is nice! This uncommon peace and quiet.

KAYLEE
It is nice.

SIMON

No bounty hunters. No slavers or crime bosses. No Alliance to worry about.

KAYLEE

Well, almost...

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT – SAME TIME

The restaurant is fancy, with AQUARIUMS throughout, some of the tanks for viewing, some for keeping the food fresh and alive.

TWO WOMEN sit at one of the tables, eating sushi. The elder of the two is ARB DIRECTOR HINES, dressed in a pressed blue uniform resembling, but not quite, Alliance Military. Her face is wrinkled with the stress of the job and keeping order within the ranks. The younger is AMY MARIN, a pretty blonde woman in her mid-twenties, dressed in the future equivalent of a business suit.

HINES

You have my attention, Miss Marin, for the remainder of this meal, and not a minute more. The Alliance Reconstruction Brigade annual review is underway.

AMY

Earlier today, Alliance military forwarded us a distress call from one of our freighters, The Forty Days, bound for Actaeon, the second moon of the gas giant, Artemis. You may remember the colonists who chose to settle there.

The director, more interested in her food than in Amy Marin, takes a beat to answer.

HINES

The ones that foolishly settled where Alliance Expansionary recommended they not, ran into trouble with their atmospheric processors, and asked us to help pick up the pieces?

AMY

(uncomfortable)

The very ones, ma'am.

HINES

And now they find themselves in need yet again?

Amy nods, eats a piece of sushi.

HINES (cont'd)

Typical. We tell them not to do something, they disobey and choose to do it anyway. And now it's our problem.

She waves a chop-stick, indicating that Amy should continue.

AMY

Further attempts to make contact were unsuccessful, but they managed to send their location and condition.

HINES

And the military cruiser did not investigate?

AMY

Section thirteen point seven of the Expansion Act, ma'am.

HINES

Ah, of course. Thirteen point seven...

AMY

If that terraforming equipment does not reach Adaeon, we are talking about an atmospheric breakdown that will destroy its ability to sustain life, and the lives of the colonists already there. We are talking about mass evacuation. Or else...

Hines chews slowly.

HINES

Do we have any volunteers onboard?

AMY

Two, ma'am.

Hines is not happy.

HINES

How long?

AMY

If we send a ship now, best estimate is that they'll have somewhere between three and five hours to repair the ship before her orbit decays beyond the point of no return.

Hines puts down her chopsticks.

HINES

Three hours...

AMY

As you are well aware, we often don't have the time to properly fund such endeavours. This mission falls into that category, I'm afraid, and since time is of the essence, certain protocols must be bypassed.

HINES

That's what the flexible fund is there for.

AMY

Precisely.

HINES

Well, then...

Hines pushes her plate away (still half-full), as if she has lost her appetite. She turns away from Amy, to face across the table.

HINES (cont'd)

On behalf of the Planetary Alliance and the ARB, I would like to thank you and your crew for your commitment, dedication, and willing sacrifice in this matter. You have chosen to serve the needs of the ARB and the ideals of our great Alliance. The Alliance thanks you, Captain Harbatkin.

We finally see that Mal is sitting right there at the table. He chews his food, while Jayne picks at it with mistrust. Mal swallows his food, wipes his mouth with a napkin, brushes crumbs off of his coat's brown lapels.

AMY

Yes, Captain. You have our thanks.

MAL

Well, you are most welcome, ladies.

(beat)

Ah... I believe there was mention of a flexible fund?



Act One

EXT. A THENS - STREET - DAY

Mal steps out of the restaurant door, holding it open for Amy. Jayne comes out last, holding a DOGGIE BAG.

AMY

Really, thank you again. Your service to the Alliance won't go unnoticed.

MAL

Don't care to be noticed, Miss Main. Just paid. Don't need no shiny medals or commendations from the likes of you high-falootin' Alliance Reactionary B-whatever folk.

AMY

Is working for us really so bad, Captain?

Mal reads, shaking it out of his system .

MAL

"Upholding the ideals of the Alliance?" Gives me the heebie-jeebies.
(shudders again)
Even just thinkin' about it.

JAYNE

Still can't believe you wore that brown rag of yours,
Ma—

Mal glares.

JAYNE (cont'd)

... Leo. The look on her face when she first saw ya!

MAL

(to Amy)

Alliance offers me coin rather than takin' it from me... I want 'em to know exactly who it is they're givin' it to.

AMY

Oh, we know. You made that pretty obvious.

The three of them walk down the street, Mal and Amy in the lead, Jayne dropping back a step, half-listening, but also taking in the sights.

AMY (cont'd)

Captain, you really shouldn't consider us to be part of the Alliance as such. We at the ARB like to think we're more enlightened than our compatriots in the military.

JAYNE

If you're so enlightened, why you like to eat raw fish?

(looks in the bag)

What do you call this stuff... squishy?

AMY

Sushi. It's a delicacy from Nippon, on Earth-that-Was.

(smiles back at Jayne)

At least you didn't eat the wasabi like popcorn. I made that mistake the first time.

JAYNE
(snorting laugh)
I've had moonshine that burnt less on the way down.

AMY
How about the way up? The boy I was with couldn't stop laughing.
(fondly, at the memory)
The <rat bastard>.

Jayne reaches into his bag, feeling around for a bite of food.

MAL
Yes, spicy food is funny. But you know what makes me chuckle? Tell me again, 'cause I just love to hear it, how come the <big and wonderful> Alliance can't spare you folks a cruiser again?

AMY
The nearest Alliance cruiser can't be diverted.

MAL
Right. That's right. Reason being again?

AMY
Section thirteen point seven of the Colonial Expansion protocol states that Alliance military personnel and equipment shall not be used to promote, advance, protect or maintain settlements not sanctioned by the Alliance.

Jayne has punched out of the conversation. He drops back, munching.

MAL
Ah yes. So, helpin' those people spinnin' round that planet, getting closer and closer with each pass, is against the law? That must be those ideals you were talkin' about.

AMY
For the military? Yes. For the ARB. No.

MAL
Gotta love bureaucracy. Nothin' else in this 'Verse can make a simple task so goram complicated.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Simon and Kaylee are still sitting on the bales, Kaylee leaning on Simon's shoulder.

SIMON
Your own private moon? That's what you want?

KAYLEE
Zoe's got one! I want one too!

SIMON
That's right.
(mimicking Wash)
"Zoe's Moon!"

KAYLEE
Would you name a moon after me, Simon?

Beat. They stare into each other's eyes.

INT. ATHENS – PORTCHECKPOINT – SAME TIME

Mal, Jayne and Amy are at the checkpoint, a large roofed area with glass walls. Amy passes her suitcase through security while a bored-looking CLERK in an Alliance uniform returns weapons to Mal and Jayne.

CLERK
We hope you enjoyed your stay on Athens. Please come again.

They take their weapons. Jayne obsessively checks his, while Mal simply takes a once-over glance and holsters. Amy exits, waiting for them.

MAL
(to Jayne)
Don't know what's worse. Alliance tryin' to kill me or bein' all friendly-like.

JAYNE
(looking at Amy)
Could stand for a little more friendliness...

They join Amy and pass through the doors into

THE LANDING AREA

In which we can see Serenity.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Kaylee and Simon smile at each other, getting closer.

SIMON
Kaylee's Moon. I like the sound of that. What's on it?

KAYLEE
Water. Lots of water. But fresh.

She moves closer.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
And gardens. With strawberries...

Kaylee's face is right next to his.

SIMON
Strawberries sound...
(beat, they get closer)
Nice. They're... an aphrodisiac, you know.

KAYLEE
(doser)
I'd have lots of 'em...

Almost dose enough for a kiss. Then—

There's a NOISE. Mal walks up the ramp—

KAYLEE (cont'd)
(deflated)
Welcome back, Cap'n.

—Followed immediately by Amy.

Simon starts and stands up, separating from Kaylee. Kaylee looks up at Simon, then at Amy.

SIMON
Amy?

Amy's eyes go wide and she freezes in mid-step, almost tripping Jayne, who is right behind her. Jayne CHOKES on a piece of sushi.

AMY
Simon?

MAL
(to Simon)
Friend of yours?

SIMON looks briefly panicked, then walks down the ramp to Amy.

SIMON
Amy, <oh, my God>, is that really you?

AMY
I could ask the same! You look great!

SIMON
And so do you!

He glances at Kaylee, then speaks more calmly.

SIMON (cont'd)
How long has it been?

AMY
Too long!

She rushes up the ramp and hugs him for a beat. Two beats. More.

Jayne shrugs, walks past them and up the ramp. He passes Kaylee, beginning to munch on food again. Mal looks at Kaylee, who still sits on the grain bales, then clears his throat. After a beat, Amy breaks from the embrace.

SIMON
(ignoring Mal)
The Captain met with you? You're the ARB contact!?

AMY
They were hiring.
(shrugs, smiles)
'See the Outer Worlds, help humanity.' That's me.

RIVER (OS)
Amy.

Amy turns around. River, Wash and Zoe have arrived. Wash carries the slinky dress in plastic wrap. He and Zoe look from Amy, to Simon, to Kaylee beyond, still sitting on the bales.

AMY
River?!? Is that you? Look at you! All grown up but still
the same beautiful River!

JAYNE
Oh, she's changed plenty!

RIVER
He's right. I'm on the tip of your tongue.
(opens mouth to show candy)
Melting away.

Amy is confused. She looks at Simon.

MAL
I hate to interrupt this <totally bizarre> reunion, but
we have a job to do that, I believe, requires us to
hurry.

AMY
Yes. Yes that's right, Captain.

Wash runs up the ramp and past them .

WASH
I'll get her in the air.

MAL
Now, Miss Marin, I will show you to your room.

Mal and Amy leave, River following them. Simon stands there for a moment, looking at Zoe, then to Kaylee. He walks closer.

SIMON
She's an old friend. From college.

KAYLEE
That's nice.

Kaylee gets up from the bale and walks away.

ZOE
(to Simon)
You two have a nice time?

SIMON
Yes, yes. We did. Thank you for watching River.

ZOE
So... can we trust her?

SIMON
Who? Amy?

ZOE
Alliance employee. Hires us for a job. Knows you,
knows River.
(beat)
Don't sit right.

Zoe walks away, leaving Simon, who is unable to answer.

EXT. A THENS LANDING PAD - DAY

Serenity lifts off and into atmo.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – LATER

Zoe and Jayne are in the kitchen, Jayne cutting up tired-looking onions, Zoe stirring a pot.

ZOE

All I'm saying is, it might not be the best idea, letting an actual employee of the Alliance on the ship.

JAYNE

She don't seem dangerous.

ZOE

Neither did Dobson.

JAYNE

Aww... I could eat her—

ZOE

Jayne—

JAYNE

(grins salaciously)

—in two bites if she causes any trouble.

ZOE finishes stirring and carefully sets the ladle down, walking back into the dining room.

ZOE

I suppose we didn't have a choice. Ain't Alliance soldiers out there that need a heroic rescue... S'ordinary folk trying to make their way.

JAYNE

(sarcastically)

'Sides, the Doc trusts her. I suppose that's good enough.

KAYLEE (O S)

Trusts her... Yeah.

Kaylee has come in through the AFT HALL, working some small MECHANICAL PART in her hands.

ZOE

You all right?

KAYLEE

You saw how he stuck to her? Like she's some <great and magnificent treasure>.

ZOE

He hasn't seen her in a long time. I wouldn't make too much of it.

KAYLEE

We don't even know who she is! She could be a— A spy! Or a bounty hunter! Or worse!

She puts the part down in a show of frustration.

ZOE

Well, she won't be here for long, 'specially if that's true.

KAYLEE

Some kinda ex-lover—

JAYNE

(snorts)

Ex-lover? I don't think the Doc could if he wanted...

(beat)

Hasn't got with you yet, has he?

Kaylee and Zoe glare at Jayne, who turns around and cleaves an onion with a mighty chop.

INT. SERENITY – PASSENGER DORMS

Simon steps up to the open door of one of the passenger dorms and knocks, looking inside. Amy sits on the bed, punching the keypad of a SMALL PDA-LIKE DEVICE.

SIMON

Hi. Am I interrupting something?

Amy punches a few more keys and puts the small device away.

AMY

No. Just catching up on datawork. Come in.

Simon smiles and steps into

THE PASSENGER ROOM

AMY

<Buddha>, it's good to see you. How long has it been?
Junior year?

SIMON

I've been... busy.

AMY
Hospital worked you that hard, couldn't even Wave old friends?

SIMON
I'm sorry. I'd meant to, but then this happened—

He gestures vaguely around them. Beat. Amy looks like she wants to ask a thousand questions, but says nothing.

SIMON (cont'd)
So you're a Reconstructionist now?

AMY
It's good work. Helping people, bringing them the blessings of civilization we've always promised. Making a difference on the Outer Moons.

(beat)

And now I run into you. Funny how we both ended up out here, isn't it? After all this time?

SIMON
Not really. We... get around. We go where the work is.

AMY
Is that what the future Head of Surgery is doing out here on a tramp freighter?

SIMON
It's... complicated.

Amy stands up, looking at Simon with genuine concern.

AMY
It's River, isn't it?

Beat. Simon is startled by her blunt insight. Then...

SIMON
No... It's me.

She sits up.

AMY
So it's not true, then? The rumors? What your parents told us. What Aidan said...

SIMON
(short)
I don't want to talk about Aidan. Or my parents.

She nods.

AMY
Are you all right?

Amy takes his hand.

AMY (cont'd)
Is there anything I can do to help?

SIMON
Please... Don't tell anyone back home you found me.

Amy smiles.

EXT. SPACE

An ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT sails through the black.

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – CHIEN'S OFFICE

The office is small and efficient, with very few personal touches. No pictures, a few small plants, and little else. CAPTAIN CHIEN and the MYSTERIOUS MAN (wearing a military uniform with no insignia), sit at a table playing WEI-CHI.

Chien makes a move, and leans back confidently.

WALLACE (OS)
Sir?

LIEUTENANT WALLACE is at the open door.

WALLACE
Sir, Athens Landing Station reports the departure of a Firefly vessel matching our target.

CHIEN
Destination?

WALLACE
Unknown. It appears there was a mix-up of some sort and part of the file was... misplaced.

CHIEN
(shakes his head)
Take us to Athens. We can track them from there.
That is, assuming you agree, sir?

The Mysterious Man makes a game-winning move.

CHIEN (cont'd)
How did you—

MYSTERIO US MAN
Thinking two steps ahead of your opponent isn't
enough.
(to Wallace)
Make best speed to Athens.

Act Two

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM

The crew sits around the table eating, Simon flanked by Amy and Kaylee.

MAL
For them as don't already know her from past lives,
this is Amy Marin, of the Alliance Reconstruction
Brigade. She's payin' the coin on this one.

The crew all mutter an awkward hello, and silence abounds, the only sounds being the scraping of cutlery on plates.

KAYLEE
So... You're friends from college?

AMY
We dated my sophomore year.

SIMON
I was at med school. Amy was an undergrad.

KAYLEE
I see. How... interesting.

Another round of silence.

AMY
(indicates the food)
This is really good.

ZOE
Not sure I concur, but kind of you to say.

JAYNE
(smiling at Amy)
I chopped the onions.

AMY
I was afraid you were all going to be subsisting on old
army rations.

MAL
We do eat our share of protein.

WASH
More than our share. But sometimes there... Oh, that's right. There's just more protein.

SIMON
(to Amy)
Do you remember that camping trip to the Red Mountains?

Amy and Simon smile at each other.

SIMON (cont'd)
(to the table)
One summer, during my residency I think, a group of us went camping. Not hard-core stuff, but we had these army ration bars nearing their expiration date—

AMY
My cousin sent them along as a joke. He'd been in the quartermasters.

SIMON
Flavorless stuff, like chewing soap. Don't know how anyone could—

Simon looks at Mal. Mal only looks back. Chewing.

SIMON
Anyhow, we had all our food in a cooler. We left it at camp and went hiking, and when we came back—

AMY
A skunk!

JAYNE
A wha-?

AMY
Forest animals... <Horrid little monsters>.

SIMON
(to Jayne)
A bit like you, actually.

Amy laughs and reaches for Simon's hand. He doesn't take hers, but he also doesn't knock it away.

SIMON (cont'd)
Anyway, this <horrid little monster> had come in and
eaten everything!

AMY
Except...

SIMON
Except the ration bars!

By now, Simon and Amy are laughing. River is too – a harsh, uncomfortable laugh – but the rest are simply half-smiling.

AMY
Left bits of the cooler strewn all over!

SIMON
The campsite was a mess!

AMY
So we had to eat those gorrarn ration bars the whole way back!

Amy and Simon laugh for a few beats, until they gradually realize that most other folks aren't. They trail off.

MAL
Well, I'm sure that experience was just mortifyin' for civilized folk such as you. 'Course, I'm sure there's plenty soldiers fought for you ate 'em without complaint.

Amy is stopped short by the sudden outburst of hostility.

ZOE
Sir...

Mal glances at Zoe, looks a bit chastised.

AMY
I meant no offense, Captain.

Beat. Everyone keeps eating.

MAL
(shakes his head and smiles)
Oh, I know. You Alliance folk never mean to offend.
Well-intentioned, the lot of you.

Everyone at the table keep their heads down but Zoe.

MAL (cont'd)

Folk have a right to live life the way they see fit. Find their own way. Without someone from on high tellin' 'em when and how to do it. Folk wanna be left well enough alone.

AMY

We're trying to help these people, Captain. Bring them the benefits of civilization we promised. But it's a <massive cost>, building—

MAL

Ain't nothin' without cost, Miss Marin, that's for sure. Even the air we breathe ain't free no more. I aim to be indebted to no one, 'cept the work of my own hands and the sweat of my own brow.

(beat)

You call it civilized life? I call it a cage.

AMY

I know there are abuses, but look at what we're building. Medicine, communications, even the most basic things need to be brought to too many places.

MAL

If they're going to be going about it, they could handle it better.

AMY

We can't make every place look like the Central Worlds overnight. Rome wasn't built in a day.

MAL

And there's lots of folks were undoubtedly glad about that. Personally, I wish you all would take more time.

AMY

And leave people to die of preventable diseases, to get hurt in pointless local conflicts, to feel scarcity when there should be plenty?

MAL

To let them find their own destiny. Do it their own way.

AMY

You'd condemn millions to wretchedness so you could be free?

MAL

Ain't wretchedness if no one owns you.

Amy and Mal look at one another. Amy shakes her head a little – she can't get through to him.

WASH
(defusing, reaching across table)
Um, could I get some of that, uh, protein?

EXT. ORBITA BOVE ARTEMIS – LATER

The gas giant looms large, nearly filling the background. On the surface swirls the evidence of great storms, and near the horizon the crescent of a moon appears.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash is in the pilot's chair, working with the instruments. Mal, Amy, Zoe, and Jayne watch.

WASH
Well, we're here, and...
(turns up a dial)
No beacon.

AMY
Nothing?

WASH
No sign of a heat trace, either. I sent out a ping, got nothing.

He looks up at Mal. Mal looks suspiciously at Amy.

MAL
Maybe there never was a ship.

AMY
Captain, I'm not sure what you're implying.

JAYNE
Think it was Reavers?

Everyone looks at him.

JAYNE (cont'd)
If it's Reavers, I ain't goin'.

ZOE
If it was Reavers, they're long gone and the cargo's safe.

JAYNE
That make it ours? Salvage?

Amy glares at him. Behind her back, Mal shrugs: "Maybe."

WASH
Wait. I'm picking up something now... Just coming up over the horizon. Couple times our size...

He taps on the keyboard.

EXT. ORBIT ABOVE ARTEMIS – SAME TIME

Approaching Serenity is a silver dot, so small against the red backdrop of Artemis. Its orbit is close. It passes beneath Serenity.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal leans over Wash's shoulder.

MAL
Is it them?

WASH
Dropping to match its orbital path...
(beat)
It's them. The Forty Days. We found 'em. She's powered down. Almost dead. Life support, if that.

MAL
Guess we'll just have to see if that's the case...

EXT. ORBIT ABOVE ARTEMIS

Serenity docks with the crippled freighter, which is about three times its size. The freighter's lights are all off, and debris scoring scars the rear of its hull, most intense around the engine.

INT. FORTY DAYS – CARGO BAY

The cargo bay is deadly silent and full of large crates and pieces of machinery that reach nearly to the ceiling, much of it bearing the 'Blue Sun: Planet Genesis' logo. The floor sways, like a ship on the rolling sea, and there is a great sense of WEIGHT to the massive crates. A gangway runs around the upper level—it's much like Serenity, but three times the scale. An open door is cut into a larger door nearly the size of the entire front wall of the cargo bay.

A flashlight beam shines out of the open door.

MAL (tinny, O S)
Hello?

Mal steps through the doorway, followed by Zoe, who is holding the flashlight. Both are in spacesuits.

After a beat, Kaylee and Amy join them, also in spacesuits. Kaylee looks at a small DEVICE, hooks it on her belt, and pops her helmet off.

KAYLEE
Air's normal, if a bit thin.

The others take off their helmets, too.

MAL
And really cold.
(shouting)
Anyone there?

ZOE
Well, we're certainly not rescuing this cargo. What is all this stuff?

AMY
Terraforming equipment, as I said. Soil binders, atmospherics...

Metallic sounds from above, as a door opens and several FOLK emerge, coming down the stairs. Two (PETER and AARON) are poor land-grubbing types in plain, dirty shirts and trousers. The third man, CHRIS, wears an oil-stained uniform with an ARB insignia. All look cold, hungry, and desperate.

PETER
Thank God you've come!

CHRIS
Are you from the ARB?

AMY
(nods)
I'm Amy Marin. Out of Athens.

AARON
Told you they'd come!

Chris, very relieved, comes down the stairs and presents himself to Amy, extending a greasy hand.

CHRIS
Chris Trager.

MAL
I'm Leo Harbatkin, Captain of the rescue boat.

PETER
I'm Peter Alvers, and this here's Aaron.

MAL
This all of you?

PETER
(shaking his head)
There's Bergen, and that other tech...

CHRIS
Lui. They were working on the engine when it went up.

KAYLEE
(barbed look at Amy)
We've got a doctor.

PETER
That would help.

AMY
And food. You all look like you could use a hot meal.

Mal interposes himself between Peter and Amy.

MAL
Show us what happened first. We don't have much time.

AARON
How much have we got? I've been too scared to look out the windows! Artem is's gettin' bigger'n redder every minute.

MAL
Not much. You'll be scraping atm'o in a few hours.
(beat, as the colonists take that in)
Got to hurry. Kaylee, see if the engine can be fixed.

CHRIS
It can't be, sir.

MAL
You don't know my mechanic.
(into his com)
Simon, we've got some injured over here, pretty bad.
Come take a look. Bring Jayne and some stretchers.
Might have to get off in a hurry.

Zoe turns to Chris.

ZOE
What happened here?

CHRIS
We were cutting close around Artemis to gain speed, when we hit some debris. It was pretty big, too, and went right into the engine. We were knocked onto emergency power. That's when we put up the beacon.

Mal joins them.

CHRIS
I was setting up life support... Lui and Bergen went into the engine room... and...

Chris stops, visibly upset. Amy moves to quietly comfort him.

PETER
An' the engine blewed up in their faces. Sent the emergency power to <goat feces>. Busted the beacon, too.

Simon comes through the door, holding his medical kit. Jayne and Wash follow, carrying makeshift stretchers. River, barefoot, tags along.

MAL
(to Peter)
That's our doctor. He'll see to your injured.

Peter nods and motions for Simon to follow him out of the cargo bay. Chris has steadied himself a little, and approaches Kaylee and Mal.

CHRIS
If you want to look at the engine, you'll have to do it from the outside. Explosion damaged the inner doors.

KAYLEE
If I can get just a little bit of function, we can keep you stable for days. Just so's you're not dead weight.

MAL
(to Kaylee)
Get to it. You and Wash.

River skips forward excitedly.

RIVER
And me!

MAL
(instinctively)
No, you—
(beat)
Maybe.

River looks to Kaylee.

KAYLEE
Extra pair of hands could help, Cap'n. An' it won't be dangerous.

MAL
(shrugs)
She's your problem, then.

RIVER
<Thank you>, kind sir. I've been out there before. I know what it's like. I'll be careful.

River's excited, but Mal's got better things to do.

MAL
(to Kaylee)
Your problem .

RIVER
You can see forever out there. No hiding, even when you're hiding.

MAL
Too much talking, too little fixing this boat.

EXT. FORTY DAYS

The shuttle flies along the edge of the ship. In closer detail, we see the terrible damage the impact scars have inflicted on the hull's integrity.

INT. FORTY DAYS – SICKBAY

Even with power, the sickbay is makeshift at best. BERGEN and LUI lie on cots, with an array of medicines and more "hom espun remedies" on a desk by the wall. Both men are badly burned and have limbs splinted.

Chris stands by the door, unable to look at them, and even Zoe, Mal, and Jayne are affected by the desperation of the scene. Peter and Aaron look to Simon, who goes right to work. Amy stands restlessly, looking for something to do.

PETER

We got 'em asleep and gave 'em some drugs for infections an' such. Best we could do.

MAL

Are they fit for travel, doctor?

Amy moves to the desk and starts organizing the drugs.

SIMON

If we're careful, and just to Serenity's infirmary.

MAL

Good. Soon's you're ready, we'll bring them over. Take 'em to—

JAYNE

Weren't we in some kind of a hurry? Brewers and all?

MAL

Ain't keeping 'em long. Get everyone together, drop 'em on Athens, and be on our way.

PETER

Wait a minute...

MAL

(to Jayne)

Should still make the drop-off with time to spare.

AARON

What about our cargo?

MAL

Kaylee can't make this boat run, it's going all the way down.

ZOE

We can't tow a ship this size. Not weighed down like you are, not this close to a gravity well. And one piece of that equipment you've got would more than fill our hold, if we could even fit it through the doors.

PETER

But our home... We got nothin' left... Nothin' else.

AARON

This ship is our future!

(looks to Peter)

I ain't leaving it.

Peter nods resolutely and looks at Mal.

PETER
We can't go on without it, sir.

ZOE
You can always go on. You can get more equipment.
The ARB will help you again.
(to Amy)
Won't they?

PETER
We don't have the money for another run. ARB helps,
but they won't do the whole thing.

AMY
(uncomfortable)
We haven't got the funding.

MAL
<Brilliant>. Long arm of the Alliance conveniently ain't
long enough.

AARON
We can't wait, neither. Not while the soil's turning to
chalk, and the air's turning to nothing, and the
gravity's going away. We wait, might not be a home to
go back to.

PETER
Better to die than to see everything you worked for
<turn to crap in your hands>.

For once Mal hasn't got a snappy retort. He looks at Zoe.

MAL
(sighs)
Let's hope Kaylee can get it running, then.

EXT. FORTY DAYS – ENGINE AREA

The shuttle has landed and Kaylee and River, in space suits, are out looking in the engine (although River's actually just staring into space, smiling). It doesn't look good. The engine's badly battered, hardly a cylinder on another, and what's left is bent, corroded, and sooty. The outer hull covering the engine area is blown away in raggedy edges—it was this that caused the hull scarring.

KAYLEE
(to herself)
Poor baby.

RIVER

Port compression is gone. Reg line's two point three-six-seven times shorter.

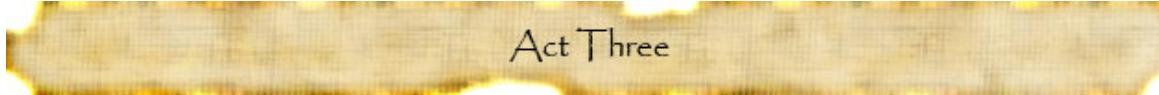
(beat)

No hope.

Kaylee stares at River for a beat. Then she then pats the wrecked engine in soothing motions and is visibly upset, close to tears.

KAYLEE (into suit's com)

It ain't getting fixed. I just can't do it. This ship ain't going nowhere but down, Cap'n.



Act Three

INT. FORTY DAYS – CARGO BAY

Mal stands in the shadows of the huge crates, a com held outward in his hand. He's looking at Amy and Chris, and Simon and Jayne stand nearby.

AMY

Are you sure there's nothing that can be done?

MAL

I already explained—

WASH (via Mal's com)

Engine's destroyed. Maybe it could be fixed at a real dockyard, But that doesn't really seem to be an option.

MAL

There you have it. This crate's going nowhere but the middle of that planet down there.

Beat.

AMY

You don't get paid to watch this ship fall, Captain Reynolds.

MAL

What?

AMY

You were hired to rescue the ship, or at least the crew...

MAL
You're weaselin' out of paying me because those two
rubes want to go down with their ship?

She looks at Chris.

CHRIS
They won't go without the cargo.

MAL
(to Amy)
Could have made that clearer, 'fore you hired a ship
too small. Ruttin' Alliance. How'd they win the war
again?

Beat.

JAYNE
Bigger ships?

INT. FORTY DAYS – INFIRMARY – SAME TIME

Zoe faces Peter and Aaron, who look utterly defeated.

ZOE
So that's the situation.

Aaron looks at Peter.

AARON
I ain't leavin'.

ZOE
So you're giving up?

AARON
I got a wife and kids back there. I ain't going back
empty-handed, watchin' 'em die like that, dyin' with
them, knowin' I failed 'em. I'm going to die like a man
out here.

ZOE
This way seems more cowardly to me.

AARON
What'd you know about havin' nothin'? With your fancy
gun and ship and all.

ZOE
Fancy ship? Kaylee should hear that.

She studies them for a beat. Two beats. The silence is uncomfortable. Peter and Aaron are not sure how to react. Then Zoe leans in, speaking quietly.

ZOE
Y'know what my dream is?
(beat)
Chickens.

Peter and Aaron look at Zoe, then each other, then back to her, still uncertain.

ZOE (cont'd)
A farm. Chickens in the yard, corn a' growing. Good man and a few kids on the porch—maybe more than a few—to drink iced tea with and watch the moon rise from the ground...
(beat)
If I had that, no broken engine could keep me from saving it, and enjoying it as long as I could.

PETER
Settle down, then, and leave us.

ZOE
And y'know why I don't? The Captain.

AARON
He your husband?

ZOE
(shakes her head)
Friend. Comrade. From the war. You don't get worse times than war. And when you're faced with death, ugly death, you go on.

PETER
That may be your way.

ZOE
Should be your way, too. You come with us, there's a chance for tomorrow. You start again. You try harder. But you live another day, an' you're one day closer to your dream.

Peter and Aaron look at one another...

INT. FORTY DAYS – CARGO BAY – MOMENTS LATER

Zoe walks in briskly.

ZOE
They ain't comin'. Rather take the easy road.
(beat)
I say let 'em stay.

Mal takes it in. Nods.

AMY
We can't just—

MAL
People got a right to choose. To die for what they believe in.
(beat)
Jayne, Simon, get the wounded back to Serenity. The rest of you, we're breaking seals in ten.
(to Chris)
You want to come, you're welcome aboard.

AMY
But, Captain, we can't just—

Mal steps around her, heading back to Serenity.

INT. SHUTTLE I – SAME TIME

Wash is flying, River looking over his shoulder. Kaylee sits in the back, despondent.

RIVER
Shame about the engine.

WASH
I know.

RIVER
It's not sleeping. It's dead.

KAYLEE
(quietly)
There's nothin' I coulda done...

WASH
Do engines sleep?

RIVER
Everything sleeps. It sleeps and sleeps and sleeps until we wake it up. Boo!
(beat)
I'm sleeping.

WASH
Yeah, well, I'm trying to pilot.

Beat. Wash looks like he's reconsidering what he just said. Maybe he was too harsh on River.

WASH (cont'd)
If you think you're dreaming, sometimes it helps to
pinch yourself.

River pinches herself.

RIVER
Doesn't help. Still sleeping.

River leans in close to Wash. He watches her sidelong as he pilots.

WASH
Pleasant dreams, at least?

RIVER
(shrugs)
Dancing. Spinning. Faster and faster, around and
around, so fast you're out of control!

WASH
That's, ah, great.

RIVER
Faster and faster, round and round—

The ship jerks as Wash starts at the controls, an idea suddenly hitting him.

WASH
Round and round! That's it!

River looks confused. Or perhaps relieved. Wash reaches one hand up, beginning to pull River down into an embrace—

WASH (cont'd)
River, honey, I could kiss you!

—and then thinks better of it and returns to the controls.

WASH (cont'd)
But that would be vaguely inappropriate, and I'd be
afraid that you might stab me.

RIVER
(smiles)
Not today.

Wash pretends to ignore her and hits the com.

WASH (into com)
Mal?

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SECONDS LATER

Jayne and Simon, carrying Lui, are on their way to the infirmary. Mal speaks into his com, while Zoe, Amy and Chris look at him with various levels of curiosity.

MAL (into com)
Really? That would work? That would work!
(beat)
Let's do it.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – LATER

Amy sits typing at the copilot's station, while Wash sits at the pilot's. Mal paces back and forth between them. Kaylee stands quietly in the corner, not happy with how comfortable Amy looks in the co-pilot's seat.

AMY
(to herself)
Six hundred thousand kilometers around... at an acceleration...

MAL
Is this gonna work?

AMY
Working on it...

Mal and Wash look at her as she finishes what she's working on, then looks up and straight at Wash.

MAL
(to Wash)
Tell me this is gonna work.

WASH
I could, but I think there's about an eighty percent chance I'd be lying.

Beat.

MAL
Still... Twenty percent better'n nothin'.

Amy looks up.

AMY (cont'd)
It'll be tight. It all depends on getting in the yoke—

MAL
Wash, can you handle that?

WASH
Do chickens fly?
(beat)
<That didn't sound right>... Do chickens not fly?

MAL
So... Yes?

WASH
It'll be on Kaylee, too. She'll have to be quick.

Kaylee nods, looking very serious.

MAL
(shaking his head)
Full-burn in a high-gravity orbit.. Who thinks of these things?

Wash grins and mock-bows in his seat.

MAL (cont'd)
Well, you...

KAYLEE
Is this really goin' to work?

WASH
Don't see why not... Other than that it's crazy and has probably never been tried before...

Not the response Kaylee was hoping for.

WASH (cont'd)
They're too heavy for us to tow them normal. We'd burn up all our fuel and probably wouldn't get anywhere. But...
(beat)
We do what they were trying to do. Whip around the planet, picking up speed. We slingshot around, picking up speed, then we grab 'em.

MAL
Can Serenity handle that strain?

KAYLEE
Cables'll break 'fore she m ore'n scratches.

MAL

They better.

AMY

And our increased inertia should be enough to let your ship drag them into a more stable orbit.

WASH

Of course, if it doesn't work, their orbit decays even worse, and if we can't get away in time, they might drag us down with them.

MAL

That last part's the bit I ain't enthused over.

AMY

They should have another day, maybe two, if it works.

MAL

Time enough to summon your friends?

AMY

Yes.

MAL

And is that good enough?

AMY

Good enough so you get paid, Captain? Yes.

She stands and walks out.

EXT. ORBITA ABOVE ARTEMIS

Serenity breaks contact with the Forty Days and rotates to begin its flight.

INT. SERENITY – INFIRMARY – SAME TIME

Chris sits nervously while Simon works on Lui. Bergen lies on the second cot. River sits in the other corner, idly playing with bandages, folding and unfolding them.

SIMON

He's going to be okay. It'll take skin grafts – probably at one of the better Core hospitals – to remove the scars, but there's no infection and nothing needs amputation.

CHRIS
(numbly)
That's good.

SIMON
I wish those two colonists would have come over.

CHRIS
Your captain or Miss Marin should have made them come.

Simon goes over to check on Bergen.

RIVER
Still wouldn't be alive.

Beat. Chris looks up and stares at her.

RIVER
Nothing to live for.

River's face goes from calm to pale and panicked.

RIVER
Nothing... inside me. Won't come out. Get them out!

River tears the bandage in two, lengthwise. Simon looks up from Bergen's side.

RIVER
(holding her head)
Can't make me... Try to turn me into them... Zhuxi. I'm nothing. A *guay hun* <ghost>. I'm asleep...

Simon crosses the infirmary and takes her hands.

SIMON
It's all right, *mei-meい*. You're here. It's me, Simon.

River looks up, and past Simon.

Amy stands in the doorway to the infirmary, looking in. Amy and River look at each other, then Amy abruptly turns and heads toward the passenger dorm.

EXT. ORBITA ABOVE ARTEMIS

Serenity flies around the planet.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM

Mal saunters in from the foredeck hall. Zoe's finishing a cup of something.

MAL
Tea?

ZOE
Iced.
(smiles)
Figured it might be my last chance.

MAL
Thought you had more confidence in your husband.

Mal smiles and pulls up a chair, looking like he wants to talk about something.

Beat. Zoe drinks.

MAL
What'd you do if you were in their place?

ZOE
The colonists? As I recall, I followed you.

MAL
I didn't quite intend to lead.

ZOE
Maybe you didn't.

MAL
Are you going all Shepherd Book on me now? Because if you are, I—

WASH (OS)
Mal! <Get your little baboon ass in here right now>

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SECONDS LATER

Mal pounds onto the bridge, followed by Zoe.

WASH
(pointing to some dials)
Signal just went out. Alliance codes.

MAL
Not again... <Goat-sucking—>

WASH
High priority.

MAL
<—Son of a goat-sucking—>

And Mal bolts from the bridge.

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE

Wallace approaches Chien and hands him a PRINTOUT.

WALLACE
An update from the ARB, sir.

Chien studies the piece of paper.

CHIEN
Change course immediately. And inform our...
passenger. At maximum speed, we should be there
within the hour.

Act Four

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY

Mal and Amy face one another among the bales of hops. Zoe, Simon, River, Kaylee, Chris, and Jayne are there as well.

MAL
You called the Alliance!

AMY
And they've found another ship. Maybe not in time to
help with the rescue, but within the day.

MAL
You called the Alliance. On my boat.

AMY
I can't very well have left..
(to Simon)
Is something wrong? Did I do something?

SIMON
I—

MAL
I'm the one talkin' to you, little miss.

Mal clenches his fist, then relaxes it.

MAL (cont'd)
I should toss you out to join 'em early.

KAYLEE
(to herself)
Don't stop on my account.

RIVER
It's very nice out there. Beautiful view.

Although Chris appears to be no threat, befuddled more than anything, Jayne sidles up next to him. Zoe moves to Mal's side, to back him or block him is anyone's guess.

ZOE
Mal...

AMY
What's your problem with the Alliance?

MAL
We ain't talking about this now. What else do they know?

AMY
Everything. There's no need for me to—

MAL
<bleeding orifices of Buddha>, could this get any worse? Why did I let you on board?

Beat. Amy stares at Mal. The crew is edgy.

RIVER
She's all right.

Everyone turns.

RIVER (cont'd)
Didn't mean it.

MAL
Best hope you're right, little one. Ain't my head they're cuttin' open like a fine, fine melon, they catch us.

River smiles indulgently. Simon glares.

AMY
What's—This is crazy.

MAL
You have no idea.

AMY
You still have to rescue that ship—

MAL
We don't have to do anything.
(beat)
But we will. Everyone, back to work. Zoe, keep a watch on Miss Marin here.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity flies around Artemis, zooming very close.

INT. SERENITY – AMY'S ROOM

Amy sits on the bed, Zoe standing in the door.

AMY
What is he so afraid of?
(beat)
It is fear, isn't it? Not just anger.

Zoe is silent.

AMY
Is it that he fought for the Independents?

ZOE
If you have to ask, you really don't know.

AMY
That's usually the way of things.
(beat)
I thought the war was long over.

ZOE
War ain't never over. May end, never over.

AMY
That's extremely unfortunate. And sad.

ZOE
Wasn't my choice. We salvage what we can. Move on.

Amy stands, visibly upset, almost defeated.

AMY
Does everyone hate us this much out here?

ZOE

You deal mostly with folk you're helping. That's bound to make you look *<like a hero>*. And the soldiers are around more. Most folk... They don't see enough of you to tell the difference.

Amy paces for a few beats, as much as she can in the small room with Zoe blocking the door.

AMY

And Kaylee... Why does she hate me? What did I do to her?

ZOE

Nothing. But I'd wager she thinks you have.

Amy looks at Zoe for a beat, then it comes to her.

AMY

Sim on? Are they... *Huai-le*, I've made a mess of things.

ZOE

I'd say you have.

AMY

It wasn't my intention.

ZOE

Never is.

AMY

I should talk to her.

ZOE

If you can say it without making things worse.

MONTAGE (INTERCUT WITH SHOTS OF SERENITY CONTINUING HER FLIGHT):

—Wash pilots intently, Mal in the copilot's seat.

—Simon sits with River in the infirmary; Chris broods over Lui's body.

—Kaylee and Jayne work on things up in the engine room.

—As Serenity rounds Artemis, she's going FAST, picking up speed... perhaps too much of it.

EXT. SPACE

The Forty Days sits quietly for a beat. Serenity approaches, roaring up on her from behind.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash sits calmly at the controls. Mal leans forward in the co-pilot's seat.

WASH (into com)
Everyone grab something. This could get.. bumpy.

EXT. SPACE

We see Serenity and the Forty Days from above and, for a moment, it appears that Serenity is going to ram right into her. Then—

Serenity dives UNDER the crippled ship.

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Kaylee stands at an open control panel, a mess of wires and cables. She jams a plug-ended cable into the box, then yanks another one out.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash adjusts the controls.

WASH
Here we go.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

A TOWING RIG, four heavy cables attached to a central YOKE, hangs from beneath the Forty Days. Serenity's neck slides neatly into the yoke, and she strains on like a draft horse.

As the yoke catches, it digs into Serenity, scratching the paint and the metal underneath.

As Serenity roars on, the cables STRAIN—

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Kaylee leans back and throws some switches.

KAYLEE
Now!

Across the room, Jayne yanks hard at a huge handle. The entire room lights gold as Serenity goes to full-burn.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

As Serenity rockets up and away, the cables strain, pulling back the yoke, practically strangling Serenity. Sparks ignite where the yoke scrapes and grinds against her hull.

The Forty Days remains in place, unmoving. Then—

One of the four cables SNAPS.

INT. FORTY DAYS – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

The massive cargo containers shake and rattle. Aaron closes his eyes. Peter is already praying.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Then the battered, crippled freighter surges up, bucking and changing its angle as Serenity continues to jet away.

INT. SERENITY – AMY'S ROOM – SAME TIME

Serenity has just stopped shaking. Amy, seated on the bed, looks up at Zoe, who is gripping the doorway to steady herself.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity strains forward like an overworked horse, the yoke digging in.

The second cable on the same side snaps.

AMY (VO)
Did it work?

The Forty Days tilts like a sinking ship and Serenity struggles to back out of the yoke.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash jerks the controls and world dips.

WASH
We're loose.

MAL
What about—?

Wash is already hitting buttons, looking at monitors.

WASH
On it.

Beat.

WASH (cont'd)
(stricken)
No.

Mal leans back.

WASH
Orbit's not stable enough. Looks like we bought them
an hour, tops.

MAL
Enough time for one more try?

WASH
Maybe. If we can repair the towing rig. If we don't run
low on fuel. If—

The PROXIMITY ALARM blares.

WASH
<Sweet bubbles of Buddha>, now what?!?

EXT. SPACE

In the distance, beyond Artemis, an Alliance patrol boat roars in at full-burn.

WASH (OS, cont'd)
Alliance patrol boat.

MAL (VO)
How long?

WASH (VO)
Seven minutes... No, six.

The patrol boat closes.

INT. FORTY DAYS – CARGO BAY

Zoe and Chris hustle in, hauling a cart with rations piled on it. Mal quickly approaches Peter and Aaron.

MAL
I'm trusting the ride wasn't too bumpy?

PETER
We're alive.

ZOE
(under her breath)
You must be very disappointed.

Peter and Aaron have the good sense to look contrite.

CHRIS
We brought some rations.

MAL
They're what we could spare. Don't taste good, but I'd imagine you're no pickier'n we are.

AARON
We're powerful grateful for all you've done. I thought we was goners.

MAL
Might still be, that patrol boat decides not to help you. This is your last chance to come with us.

Beat. The colonists' decision is clear.

MAL (cont'd)
(nods)
Here's where I would make an inspirational speech, but I'm afraid we're in a tearing hurry.

PETER
Fair travels, Captain.
(to Zoe)
Ma'am, you ever find yourself on Actaeon, maybe you and yours'll stop by for some tea?

She smiles slightly, nods and walks back toward the ship.

ZOE
Maybe.

SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SECONDS LATER

Mal speaks into his com as Zoe closes up the cargo bay doors, Chris standing looking useless.

MAL (into com)
Wash, takes us out of here. Now.

WASH (via com)
Where we heading, Captain?

MAL (into com)
Uh...

AMY (O S)
What about Solomon?

Amy's on the upper catwalk, Jayne behind her.

AMY
There's an ARB station there. I'll see that Bergen and Lui are taken care of, and you won't have to go back to Athens.
(beat)
Since you seem to be so keen on avoiding the Alliance.

Mal considers, then nods.

MAL
Could be that's a good idea. I might just do that.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity boosts away from the Forty Days.

We watch Serenity jet away from Artemis, then reverse around to see the Alliance patrol boat bearing down on the Forty Days.

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – SAME TIME

Chien and the Mysterious Man look at the Forty Days through the forward window. Wallace is further back, looking over the shoulder of one of the BRIDGE CREW.

WALLACE
It appears we're too late, Captain...
(beat)
Sir, civilian freighter Forty Days requests immediate assistance.

He pauses, apparently seeing something else of interest on the COMPUTER CONSOLE before him.

WALLACE (cont'd)
No, wait. There's a heat signature at the edge of the system. Could be our Firefly, sir.

CHIEN
(sighs)
Set course to pursue—

MYSTERIOUS MAN
Belay that order, lieutenant.

Chien looks at him.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
I see citizens in danger.

CHIEN
(reluctant)
Sir, section thirteen point seven of the Expansion Act plainly states—

MYSTERIOUS MAN
I believe I just gave an order.

CHIEN
(relieved)
Yessir!

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE

Mal, Jayne, and Zoe look at Wash expectantly.

WASH
No sign of pursuit.
(sigh of relief)
We're clear.

INT. SERENITY – INFIRMARY

Simon is running tests on Bergen when Amy comes in.

AMY
(smiling)
Simon, it's amazing to find you out here.

SIMON
The Captain let you out? Are you all right?

AMY
He's a very hospitable man.
(beat)
Really. You seem to be doing just fine out here.

SIMON
I wish I had your confidence.

She kisses him on the cheek.

AMY
I missed you, you know? Send a wave if you can.

SIMON
I'll do my best. Seeing you again...

She smiles again, and heads out the door.

SIMON (cont'd)
(to himself)
...has been like finding a little piece of home.

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM

Kaylee's bent over, working on the engine. Amy knocks on the open door.

KAYLEE
(standing, all greasy)
Yeah? Oh.
(beat)
It's you.

AMY
I came to... apologize for the mess I made.

KAYLEE
Ain't nothin'... Figured someone like you'd come along
someday.

The two women study each other for a beat.

AMY
Simon and I... We're just old friends.
(beat)
Do you need some help with the engine?

Kaylee looks her up and down skeptically, particularly Amy's nice clothing.

AMY (cont'd)
I've done some mechanical work in my time. You see a
bit of everything in the ARB.

Beat. Then Kaylee smiles and tosses her a wrench.

KAYLEE
C'mon then.

INT. SERENITY – SIMON'S ROOM

Simon comes in, sits down, and turns on his Wave monitor, typing briefly. An image appears on the screen. INARA SERRA, in Training House Priestess regalia, appears and smiles at Simon.

INARA
Hello, Simon. A pleasure as always.

He nods a greeting to the monitor.

SIMON
Things just became a bit more complicated.

INARA
Complicated in a good way, or a bad way?

SIMON
I'm not quite sure.

EXT. SPACE

The Alliance patrol boat tows the Forty Days away from Artemis.

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

The Mysterious Man puts a hand on Chien's shoulder.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
Don't worry, Captain. We know where Harbatkin's going. We'll be ahead of him soon enough.

BLACKOUT